

Ersat

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This fan-fiction article, **Ersat**, was written by [Adalwulf of Aedirn](#).
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“My husband came stumbling out of the woods three days after he went missing. He looked like him, he smelled like him... but when he smiled, it didn't reach his eyes. And when he laughed, it sounded like a man screaming in agony.”

—Anonymous woman

The **Erzat** or **Ersat**—known in local folklore as a **Mimic**, **Hidebehind**, or **Lovefeeder**—is a highly manipulative, otherworldly cursed being. Summoned exclusively when a victim takes a single step up the anomalous [Darynka's Staircase](#), the erzat is a parasitic entity that steals the faces of the lost to escape its dimensional confines.

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Ersat

Taxonomy

Classification Cursed One

Ecology

Lifespan Sempiternal

Intelligence Alien-like

Nature Alien-like

Habitat Large wooded areas and old-growth forests

Diet Parasitic

Prey Sentient beings, mostly [humans](#)

Predators [Witchers](#)

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Characteristics and Physiology

An Erzat does not possess a singular form; its anatomy shifts entirely depending on its current state of parasitism.

- **The Faceless Form:** In its true, unbound state, an erzat appears as a completely faceless, pale humanoid. Despite lacking eyes, ears, or a mouth, it possesses "*faceless perception*"—a bizarre, otherworldly sense that allows it to perceive, smell, and hear its surroundings with perfect clarity.
- **The Stolen Disguise:** Once it secures a host, it physically transforms to perfectly mimic the victim.
- **The Bestial Form:** If its parasitic bond is forcibly severed (such as a witcher rescuing the original host from the woods), the erzat loses its human disguise and violently transforms into a massive, rotting humanoid with elk-like features, superficially resembling a bulkier leshen.

The Mimic's Curse & The Three-Day Rule

The erzat operates under the strict, magical confines of the "*mimic's curse*". Because it is bound to the territory of the Staircase, it must use a human vessel to escape.

The Lure

An erzat cannot target a fully alert human. It preys exclusively on those whose minds are impaired—whether drunk, high on drugs, or weakened by severe illness. Using limited mental manipulation, the faceless entity places the impaired victim in a hypnotic trance, luring them deep into the treeline. Once there, it hides the victim's body inside a tree hollow, placing them in suspended animation.

The Lovefeeder's Escape & Unnatural Fixation

To successfully leave the forest, the erzat must be physically escorted out of the woods by someone who shares a genuine, "*loving*" bond with the host victim. The erzat will emerge from the treeline, pretending to be the lost victim, but its behavior surrounding the concept of "*love*" is deeply unsettling.

- **The Mechanics of Affection:** Because an erzat possesses an alien intelligence, it does not actually feel or understand love. Instead, it views mortal concepts like "*family*," "*marriage*," or "*parenthood*" strictly as mechanical keys to a lock. Titles like "*husband*," "*wife*," "*mother*," or "*brother*" are intensely valuable to it, and it will use these words constantly, though often with the wrong inflection.
- **Obsessive Fixation:** An erzat disguised as a victim will become unnervingly excited or fixated when discussing familial bonds. It might constantly touch a wedding ring, obsessively repeat wedding vows, or demand uncomfortable, continuous declarations of affection from its rescuer. It does this to ensure the "*bond*" qualifies under the curse's rules and remains active during the escort.
- **The Three-Day Limit:** It has exactly "*three days*" to trick a loved one into escorting it past the boundary of the woods. If it fails to secure an escort, the magic fails; the erzat is violently drawn back to the treeline, its face dissolving and its body shriveling until it becomes part of the forest. The original host body, drained of its lifeforce to power the disguise, then dies of starvation.

The Aftermath of Escape (The Cuckoo's Nest)

If an erzat successfully manipulates a loved one into escorting it past the boundary of the forest, the rules of the mimic's curse are fulfilled, and the results are catastrophic.

- **The Death of the Host:** The exact moment the erzat crosses the territorial threshold, the parasitic tether snaps. The original host body, still trapped in the tree hollow, is instantly desiccated—reduced to a mummified husk in seconds as the erzat permanently claims their physical identity.
- **The Hollow Integration:** Now free from the Staircase's territory, the erzat returns home with the family. However, the true horror begins as it attempts to integrate into human society. Because it no longer has the host's lifeforce

to draw memories or subtle emotional context from, its mimicry begins to heavily degrade into the "*uncanny valley*." It will perfectly mimic daily chores and routines, but it does not sleep, does not blink naturally, and will often stand in pitch-black rooms staring at the walls for hours.

- **The Shift to Fear:** The erzat feeds on extreme emotional resonance. Once it realizes it can no longer maintain the illusion of "*love*," it shifts its focus to the next most potent emotion: terror. As the family realizes that the thing in their home is not their loved one, the erzat revels in their psychological torment.
- **The Culmination:** Once the family's love has completely turned to fear and their emotional resonance is fully drained, the erzat will finally drop its stolen face. It will assume its towering, bestial form to slaughter the household before slipping away into the night, acting as a free-roaming agent of the cosmic horrors that spawned it.

The Changeling's Paradox (The Tamed Abomination)

In exceedingly rare and tragic cases, grief-stricken families may realize the erzat is a mimic, but their desperation and sorrow drive them to accept and love the entity anyway. Because the erzat's alien intelligence operates on a strict mechanical cycle (Love -> Degradation -> Fear -> Slaughter), being met with genuine, unconditional love "*despite*" its true nature causes a catastrophic malfunction in its alien logic.

- **The Cycle Broken:** Denied the fear it expects to feed on, the Erzatz becomes trapped in its initial "*love*" phase indefinitely. The mimicry stops degrading, but it does not become human. Instead, it accepts its role within the family unit with a terrifying, absolute literalness.
- **The Territorial Guardian:** The Erzatz's mechanical understanding of "*love*" morphs into hyper-aggressive, territorial possession. It becomes fiercely, violently protective of its "*family*." It will brutally slaughter anyone it perceives as a threat to the household's happiness—be it a violent bandit, a strict tax collector, or simply a nosy neighbor.
- **The Tragic Thralls:** The family effectively gains an apex, otherworldly predator as an eternally loyal guardian. However, they are forced to live in absolute secrecy, hiding the creature's true nature and cleaning up its gruesome kills. Over time, the family is often driven to madness, isolating themselves entirely from human society to protect the monster wearing

their loved one's face.

Abilities & Traits

- **Voice Mimicry:** Erzats can perfectly mimic any voice they hear, but do not understand tone or nuance.
- **Tree-to-Tree Teleportation** (Hidebehind): Within its bound territory, an erzat can instantaneously teleport between trees. It must break line of sight (hiding behind a trunk) to emerge from behind another tree. This allows it to effortlessly outpace a fleeing human or even a galloping horse.
- **Parasitic Empowerment:** The closer the erzat is to its immobile host body, the healthier and more magically powerful it becomes. It can project a mental haze over the area and even place non-inebriated humans in short-term trances if they stand too close to the host tree.

Slaying

Preparation & Equipment

A eitcher tracking an Erzatz must rely heavily on investigation rather than pure combat. A silver sword heavily coated in Cursed Oil is mandatory. The silver physically burns and smokes upon contact, causing the entity immense pain, while the oil disrupts the negative energies tying the curse to the material world.

Combat Strategy (Breaking the Bond)

Because the erzatz grows exponentially stronger the closer it is to its host body, a direct confrontation near the tree hollow is highly dangerous. In fact, an erzatz may willingly lead an armed group toward its host to gain a massive physical advantage.

The optimal witcher strategy is to locate the tree hollow stealthily and physically extract the host's body. The moment the host is removed from the hollow, the parasitic bond is shattered. The erzatz will instantly lose its human disguise, transforming into its rotting, bestial form. While terrifying, this bestial form is cut off from its battery (the host) and can be slain like a traditional cursed monster.

The Uncanny Valley (Identifying an Erzatz)

An Erzat's greatest weakness is its alien intelligence. It completely lacks an understanding of humanoid inflection or social cues. A witcher can identify a disguised erzat by observing its reactions: it might scream in a situation that calls for laughter, or use the wrong pitch and emotion when expressing fear, making it seem bizarre, silly, or deeply unsettling to ordinary humans.

Monster Lore & Behaviors

Habitat

Like the Darynka's Staircase that spawns them, Erzats are bound to large wooded areas and old-growth forests, such as the ancient borders of Brokilon. They do not wander; their entire existence is a desperate, parasitic gambit to escape the treeline and infiltrate human society.



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